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# What Does (the Study of) World Politics Sound Like?

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## Introduction

In this article we look at how music can be brought more consciously into the orbit of the current interest in popular culture and world politics. Our aim here is to follow on from an earlier collaborative project in this vein in order to reflect further on the methodological implications for International Relations (IR) scholars interested in incorporating music as an object of study at the popular culture-politics-society nexus.<sup>1</sup> Our reasoning, then and now, is that music and music-making – however construed as art form, creative and sociocultural practice – can enhance a body of work that looks to de-reify received analytical categories of the discipline and thereby continue to enrich its key debates, as diverse champions of critical IR schools of thought have long called for. Music – construed here as an intrinsically acoustic, sonic undertaking and embodied experience – can question predominant understandings that the best way to study world politics is in a primarily literary or visual register, thereby relegating other registers (in this case the aural) to a secondary role.

The interpretative opportunities presented by song lyrics notwithstanding, we would argue that there are many musical genres, indeed many sonic avenues, by which to explore the political dimensions of the ‘musico-literary’ imaginations that over-determine the modern nation-state signalled by Michael Shapiro (2004). There are new empirical openings, given the many, relatively unexplored possibilities for IR scholars to connect with work being done on the politics of music/musical politics from a sociological, phenomenological and musicological perspective, as signalled by contributors to Franklin (2005), discussed in Brown (2008) and Street (2012), and argued in Gilroy (1993), Goehr (1994), Korsyn (2003) and Thompson and Biddle (2013), for instance.

There are also theoretic-methodological areas to consider at the intersection of research into music-making and the music business, from both an international political economy framework (Halbert 2005, Negus 1999) and practitioner perspective, as alluded to by scholar-practitioners such as Miller (2004, 2008), Mowitt (2002), Said (1992) and Barenboim and Said (2003), for instance. IR scholarship has had to rely, to date, on the work of music specialists in cultural studies, musicologists, sociologists and geographers who have been interested in the interplay between music, society and politics – with or without the impetus of globalisation and its critics.

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<sup>1</sup> Entitled *Resounding International Relations: On Music, Culture and Politics*, edited by Franklin, (2005) and to which Davies contributed a chapter (Davies 2005), this volume draws on punk, classical opera, examples of ‘world music’ from sub-Saharan Africa to Southeast Asia, stadium rock, global music marketing, and the Western classical canon. Contributing authors provided insights, and entry points into some of the music, and soundscapes that interpolate, indeed can disrupt the Western, geopolitical and state-centric *ideoscapes* (Appadurai 2002) and cultural teleologies (see Attali 1989) underpinning mainstream Music and IR theory and research.

In this context, our inquiries begin with the insight that even before the web or the rise of sampling and DJ cultures, music has had the double propensity of being a product of a particular time and place and also able to take leave of these parameters; all sorts of music (and musicians) have crossed physical and cultural borders for centuries. Moreover, as music is made and distributed increasingly online and standard notions of music, if not musical practice (composing as well as performing), have been transformed through the influence of electronic and now digital technologies, we can see how critiques of mainstream (read: Western) theory and research in Music and IR have many points in common (Franklin 2005, pp. 5-6). As popular culture enters the study of world politics, taking its place within the cultural/aesthetic turn in the literature, then music has a role to play in these inquiries.

But what, exactly, does a focus on music bring to the study of the culture-world politics nexus on the one hand, of which popular culture is one aspect, and debates about the interrelationship between politics and aesthetics on the other? Both notions remain contested by those who maintain that IR, as an academic discipline, is more social science than humanities; bearing in mind that art and culture are longstanding avenues of inquiry in the latter. Whilst considering music – as both art form and creative practice, integral to how popular culture and everyday life are intertwined – appears straightforward (after all, pop music pervades our daily lives, is a global business, sociocultural phenomenon with political dimensions in various measures), how to engage with music as part of the study of world politics does present some specific conceptual and methodological challenges.

The first challenge is meta-theoretical for the traditional levels of analysis in IR and wider debates about IR as a discipline; namely that techno-economic changes in how music is made, consumed and circulated over the last few decades as a digitised, web-based undertaking underscore the way in which the disciplinary privileging of the 'international' is being confronted by global – translocal or indeed transnational – scales of operations and sets of actors.

The second challenge relates to the way in which micro-levels of analysis are now being considered as constitutive of politics writ large, e.g. practices of everyday life, gender, race and class axes that underpin the way power and privilege contribute to the making and breaking of world orders, political institutions and imaginaries. As noted above, these days music is made (composed, remixed and performed), listened – and danced – to in ways that occur within, as well as across, national borders, filling and linking social and cultural spaces at fibre-optic speeds, in real-time and in time-shifting modes. Audiences and artists who are convening in these multifaceted spaces (online and offline) are doing so as part of an individualised listening or creative experience (through headphones, when composing), at home or on the move, as well as a communal, crowd-based experience; in-the-flesh proximities or on-screen via live link-ups or social networks.

In short, like everyday life and politics, music operates as a global phenomenon as much as it can also be explored as something that is rooted in the local, the parochial, physical boundaries of execution and consumption. The multidimensional and cross-border dimensions to music-making and music consumption, psycho-emotional or communal experience, have become increasingly normalised in computer-saturated and web-infused societies, even as these shifts in venue and means have in turn radically altered the practice and the business of music-making itself. But this, too, is not that new as such, given the longer twentieth-century history of change in the arts through techniques of mechanical reproduction and the rise of mass consumer societies, chronicled and critiqued by early critical theorists (Benjamin 1970 [1936], Horkheimer and Adorno 1972 [1947], Adorno 2002 [1938]).

The possibilities are seemingly endless when it comes to the musical and historical repertoire available to us, as is the research literature and play-lists rich and full of cross-references.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of the discussion below is to isolate some conceptual and practical rubrics for readers interested in taking a musical/musicological approach to well-honed and emerging approaches in IR. First, we offer two examples by way of illustration and as anchors, to highlight the polysemic and multiplex terrain that the study of music offers (the study of) world politics.

We then proceed to look at some of the conceptual parameters of encountering International Relations theory and research through/as music and sound. To do this, we have to consider what music is, what defines it. These questions are what pose methodological challenges to IR, at least insofar as an engagement with them can see music as part of, but not dependent upon, the worldly configurations of sense and sensation, intellectual engagements that also tell us what – and where – politics must be.

We conclude with a recapitulation of our main themes and an invitation for those engaging with world politics as auditory, sonic, and – with that musical phenomena to take on board – the need to be also well informed about how music researchers, along with their colleagues in other disciplines, approach the study of music and/as politics. Scholarly engagements that are also scholarly practice and collaboration can ensure that the work of critical music researchers can contribute to the growing interest in critical studies of world politics and popular culture.

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<sup>2</sup> For instance, PW Singer and Allan Friedman provide a playlist on the webpage promoting their latest book, *Cybersecurity and Cyberwar* (2014) to help the future purchasers get 'into the vibe of the book and its findings, with the certain lyric that resonated to the realm of cybersecurity and war....'; See <<http://www.cybersecuritybook.com/song-playlist/>>. See also the CD compilations provided with Miller (2004, 2008).

**By Way of Illustration**

So let us begin with reference to two recent musico-political events, illustrations of one 'real-life' interrelationship between music and world politics. The first took place in Indonesia. The second was in Russia. What they both share is the ferocious response of local and national authorities, which led, in turn, to much outcry from political leaders and activists around the world, to the music being performed: punk. In December 2011, police in Banda Aceh, the only province in Indonesia governed by Sharia law, arrested over sixty concertgoers attending a punk rock show. While there were no charges made against those who were detained, the police shaved their heads, burned their clothing, and sent them to camps for so-called moral re-education. Indonesia has a thriving punk scene and while conflicts with the police were nothing new to them, many punks were taken aback by the severity and scale of the crackdown in Banda Aceh and its implications for gatherings of punks in both Bali and Jakarta.

Second, a global musical event and political cause célèbre of recent times: the fate of Nadezhda Tolokonnikova and Maria Alyokhina, who served 21 months in prison after a performance of their band Pussy Riot, part of an artist collective that has made its name around the world for high profile anti-government performances in Russia. The gig that cost Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina their liberty took place on 21 February 2012 in Moscow's Russian Orthodox Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, where they performed a 'punk prayer' criticising Vladimir Putin and linking him and the Orthodox Church hierarchy to political corruption.

These two cases, taken separately and together, illustrate the more explicitly political connotations of one particular sort of popular music – punk, in this case – several decades after it first emerged as the music of a youth culture of political – and musical – dissent in the US and UK (Marcus 1990). Punk is political by definition and declamation: quite literally (lyrics are provocative), sonically (loud, three-chord harmonies, musically and socioculturally – as an anti-aesthetic and do-it-yourself approach to making and distributing music (Davies 2005, Dunn 2008). At the time, and since, punk musicians have made a point of upsetting the musical and sociopolitical status quo.

These two events also highlight several contemporary topics in the study of world politics. In the first instance, how the response of religious authorities in Aceh to this concert may or may not support Samuel Huntington's 'Clash of Civilizations' thesis in a post-9/11 context where Islamic fundamentalism is pitted against western secularism (Huntington 1993, Said 2001). Or how the humiliating treatment of the detainees by the Aceh authorities raises questions about states' responsibility to protect the human rights of their citizens under international human rights law. These concerns become even sharper in the Pussy Riot

case, as the trial and persecution of these women went viral, led to political interventions by Western governments in the context of Western Europe and US geopolitical tensions with Russia, and arguably set up a chain of events that is still unfolding today.<sup>3</sup>

Whilst the musicological, cultural or sociological dimensions to these two examples have their own interest for other disciplines, IR scholars could reasonably stake claims for having the analytical tools to apprehend the geopolitical significance of such events. In doing so, the music, performances and audience responses become passing references to the main themes of politics writ large. But need this be so? Does this not overlook an opportunity to reconsider how the geopolitics may be just as much a musicological matter? This is our entry point for this article, namely that musically disengaged accounts would overlook how these events and their aftermath cannot be fully explored by separating them from their respective sorts of *music*, *attendant publics* and *ways of doing things* (Rumens 2012, Davies 2005, Dunn 2008). This is not to suggest that punk music is the only sort of popular music to express discontent and dissent or elicit violent responses from power elites, local governments, social and religious authorities, or state apparatuses (Bennett et al. 1993, Mohaieman 2008).

Jazz, hip-hop and various sorts of classical music have been outlawed, objected to – if not rejected – and directly censored for political as well as cultural reasons (Brown 2005, Wichelen 2005, Ross 2010, pp. 215-259). Moreover, the historical record shows that musicians across the ages have been often prominent political and social commentators, if not activists. The involvements of Joan Baez, Fela Kuti, Bob Geldorf, Bono and Billy Bragg are but some examples of the various sorts of political activism that musicians engage in self-consciously today. Music – like art – and politics do mix. How this mix can make sense for scholars of world politics, and vice versa, is the question occupying all contributors to this collection.

### **Rationale and Conceptual Notes**

In the decade since the publication of *Resounding International Relations*, IR has, in certain ways, opened itself to culture, but it has done so in ways that still remain quite comfortable to the dispositions of IR theory. Indeed, for a good generation now, IR scholars

<sup>3</sup> The Pussy Riot case has generated its own literature, in some degree due to the strategic and self-consciously global approach that the Pussy Riot members adopted, as high-profile critics of the Putin government; e.g. visibly engaged with an international audience (the name of the group is English, not Russian, and spelled using the Roman and not Cyrillic alphabet); staging the event in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour and uploading it to YouTube. And persisting, even after their release, when Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina participated in a performance staged in Sochi during the 2014 Winter Olympics. This performance was also suppressed violently, as was witnessed around the world via social media.

– feminists, Gramscians, Foucauldians, postcolonial theorists, for example – have been uncovering, reconsidering, problematising and beckoning us to the manifold connections and disconnections between the social world and the political. Musically speaking, the most well-rehearsed tune is sung in the key of the international, namely inter-state relations that are apprehended along the classical levels of analysis problem, laid out by Kenneth Waltz (2001 [1954]), embellished and revised since then from within the (neo) realist and liberal pluralist paradigms.

For popular music, pop songs in effect, this entails an interest in locating evidence of geopolitical events – catastrophes like natural disasters or war, social unrest or political protest in the manifest content (i.e. overtly political lyrics or song-titles). Also in classical or traditional musical forms, this focus on political denotations lends itself to an interest in political musical forms (protest songs, martial music, war requiems, for instance), global musical – to wit, media events such as Live Aid/Live 8 with a clear sociopolitical agenda, or excavations of past landmark performances or concerts (such as Woodstock, or indeed the Pussy Riot event above) as geopolitical artefacts. Courtney Brown divides these two sorts of engagement, politics in the music and the politics of music/musical politics, into two methodological camps: representational and associational (2008, pp. 3-4).

We would add a third, one that lends itself to semiotic and post-positivist sensibilities in critical IR literature and new music research: namely the evocative, connotative dimensions to music as sonic and literal meaning-making and political agency. And to that a fourth dimension: embodied affects and experiences of sonic, audible, worlds. That said, we contend – and the literature bears this out on the whole – that IR has remained impervious to the latter two dimensions to political realities and imaginaries.

The converse is not the case, however. For musicologists have shown a steady interest in this intersection, how politics can be read from, and into a musical piece, event, performance or musical output. Or how music-making is also embedded in specific sociocultural practices and political economic geographies, travels across time and space, how it reveals or confronts incumbent power hierarchies of class, race and gender. These themes are also of regular concern to (ethno) musicologists, music scholars and cultural theorists (Bennett et al. 1993, Pasler 2008). These scholars study secular as well as sacred music because music is necessarily a social activity, an undertaking that is not a priori separate from the world at large. And in the history of the modern – Westphalian – state system, historians, philosophers and musicologists have observed if not looked to find the sonic, musical traces of modernity's *Zeitgeist* and aesthetic imagination.<sup>□</sup>

To recall our earlier point, the most pressing challenge presented by situating music in IR has to do with incorporating the debates that have engaged philosophers and scholars of music (classical and popular forms, and those from non-western cultures) about music as



an object of study and domain of inquiry with its own historiographies, inter and intra-disciplinary concerns, and core concepts (Franklin 2005, Weinrobe and Inayatullah 2005, Gilroy 1993, Shapiro 2004). For now we will settle on two working premises. First, that music can be defined as a 'temporal sequence of sounds' (Adorno, in Franklin 2005, p. 10); what sort of sequence, sounds and temporal criteria being moot. Second, that conventional musical analysis can take us quite some way in understanding the core object of analysis.

These key elements by which a piece of music, or musical form, is dissected on its own terms or as they relate to the sociocultural, political and economic context in which it emerges (see Said 1992, Ross 2010, Berger 2007) are variously listed as melody, harmony, rhythm, tone, tempo, dynamics and form; additional elements in this analytical menu include timbre, intensity and duration.

At first sight, these basic elements of music can furnish any IR scholar with the analytical tools to dissect their music of choice, taking these formal elements to meet a discussion of the political circumstances and/or sociocultural effects of the case in hand. To recall, Courtney Brown (2008, pp. 4-5) terms this the associational aspect to explorations of the music-politics intersection. Music that has been associated with a political event or period or a musician who has identified with, or been in turn associated with, politics. Apart from form, and arguably rhythm, all these elements have a sonic component, a material and embodied physics and physiology. And with that, analytical characteristics according to the time and place and historical moment in which the music on hand is being considered, or created.

This is where *form*, and with that the philosophy of music, plays a distinct analytical role; form is at once a conceptual, historiographical and historical discussion, e.g. defining, locating the arrival and then codifying the consolidation of classical symphonic form or three-minute pop song in their respective canons (e.g. Berger 2007). And when we consider those properties, like time or rhythm, that are not strictly construed as sonic, i.e. based on certain arrangements of sounds and tonalities, or pulsations composed and/or compiled, we can hear that these elements also have sociocultural dimensions; e.g. the length and tempi of symphonies from different periods (e.g. early classical or the late romantic period), that of a piece of prog rock versus a punk number.

However, when it comes to theories of musical form, and with this the history of western music in particular, philosophical and conceptual issues remain an ongoing axis for debate – musical form and language treated as a synecdoche for continuities, breaks with the past (Berger 2007) or future portents (Adorno 2002, Ridley 2004, Pasler 2008, p. 49 *passim*, Miller 2008). Music scholars, composers and performers ponder these connections and

disputes as part of their historiographies and empirical (namely music-referenced) repertoires. As such, shifts in musical form, and how to theorise these shifts, bespeak the disciplinary and historiographical demarcations of research into western classical music and then twentieth-century popular music (Brown 2008, Korsyn 2003).

Ethnomusicology aside, and with that the market genre of 'world music' notwithstanding, in the tradition of western music scholarship the rise of 'new music research', feminist music studies and the influence of postmodern thought on the study of the musical (classical) canon have continued to question fundamental assumptions in ways that echo – but do not simply match – comparable ones in IR (Franklin 2005, pp. 11-12, Pasler 2008). So far, scholars of world politics have been mainly engaging with the representational dimension of popular music lyrics (Brown 2008, pp. 4-5) or how music celebrities engage with political processes, or activism, while neglecting the subcultural intersections of particular musical genres.

The punk examples above, as they collide or collude with national or global political dynamics, illustrate why this latter orientation is indeed necessary (Davies 2005), but not in itself sufficient, if music is to take a fuller role in furthering IR inquiries that are of interest to us today.

### **Musical Categories: Which Music Do We Mean?**

The literature on the history of western music in the classical and popular traditions, as well as non-western music, is vast. The dominant narrative in the former case is one in which western music (classical, but also popular traditions) develop alongside the modern nation-state and Westphalian state system (Attali 1994, Gay 2007); a musicologist's teleology that has its own mainstream and critical literatures (for example, Adorno 2002, Benson 2003), as we note above. For our purposes, though, we would like to posit the following conceptual parameters for the sake of argument.

First, we take music as a generalised noun for any number of material and social practices or objects of analysis that are sonic, 'organised', 'found' or sampled sounds of some sort or another that can be created and performed nowadays by any number of instruments, traditional and electronic. Second, we consider that studies of music, broadly defined, can be deployed to consider longstanding questions in the field of IR and can indeed open up new avenues for addressing those elements of social/political/economic relations that are suppressed in international politics.

But we would want to do more, to take up the gauntlet laid down in debates in musical research that took classical musicologists to meet popular culture studies and feminists;

practitioners who have been redefining what it means to be a musician and a scholar (Said 1992, Barenboim 2003, Miller 2004); lyricists and rappers who encode the political in allegories, poems and metaphors in their songs, raps and performances. We mean to go even further than searching for explicit political meanings via a musical moment, song title or lyric, to start unpacking the elements of world politics into those reserved for the aforementioned standard musical analysis.

This is a critical consideration of the sound of world politics and of world politics as sounds of a particular order. For where the manifest content as written text, i.e. lyrics, is no longer primary, we need to embrace how sound has physical and emotional properties, as those scholars interested in affect contend (for example, Thrift 2004, Gammon 2008, Bennett 2010; but compare Leys 2011): how bodies emulate and absorb polyrhythms, how the spoken word has also a beat, a melody and a timbre of its own, with a host of cultural, gender and ethnic genealogies to get to grips with (Mohaieman 2002, Mowitt 2002, Henriques 2008).

Third, we will consider music, again with a broad and inclusive notion of what this may mean, as a mobile and motile cultural practice *in the plural* (Certeau 1997). There are different ways of situating music (socially, culturally, geographically) with different implications for distribution of roles: who 'composes' the music, who performs it, who listens and how, etc. Despite these differences, music emerges not in the abstract but in the realisation of a musical event involving the activation of these (plural, diversely organised and distributed) roles and modalities, locales of reception, and sound waves.

There is thus no a priori musical communion of bodies within a pre-given national context; music comes together in soundscapes that are, in turn, embedded in shifting sociocultural, geographical and politicised power relations. In this way, musics connect: articulate and disarticulate multidimensional relationships and experiences, and affiliations that are bound to yet also ignore formalised boundaries such as citizenship, high versus low culture, western tonalities, and cultural conventions.

So, if sound is vision's poor relation, at least in IR, left outside the broad tent of plural but rational and scientific epistemologies that underpin both empirically descriptive and critical, deconstructive analyses, this, too, is a situation embedded in these power relations. Franklin's point on how the study of world politics can also entail ways of 'making audible' sounds and voices not heard (Franklin 2005, pp. 13, 2013) can be understood in relation to the macro- and micro-politics nexus of these connections and networks of social relations.

Learning to listen is not to *escape* from the international (Walker 2010), or indeed the global, but to engage with it. Developing musicological modes alongside those of literary

and visual analysis currently in favour, we can render different registers of the political audible. Then it becomes possible to refigure these political registers through, and in musical compositions and creations, performances that include mixing, improvisations or aurally connected bodies that are also physically connecting, even across different physical spaces through information and communication technologies, or acoustically in situ or while on the move.

Investigating ways of hearing, or musicking (Small 1998), the international as but one dimension to the study of world politics today does not, however, provide any cosy guarantees of a transcendental alternative. So the fourth challenge then is how to take the analytical tools of musical analysis, along with studies of attendant publics and ways of doing things, right into the heart of the latest phase of the (popular) 'cultural turn' in IR. This means learning how to unpack these elements; across conventional orderings of time and space and conventional levels of analysis that would put the local and the translocal somewhere far below the higher import of the international and global arenas of political action. This is how we can even engage more productively in discussions of why Beethoven's setting of the *Ode to Joy* in the last movement of his Ninth Symphony (D minor, Op. 125, a.k.a. 'the Choral', 1824) is repeatedly played at major moments of political symbolism, comparing perhaps different interpretations of this well-worn and perhaps symphonic sample.<sup>4</sup>

### **What Does the Study of Music Offer Scholars of World Politics?**

In this section, we discuss three ways of considering how IR scholars can broach music as a field, and object of inquiry, within the current (popular) cultural turn: music cultures and/as content, music and the senses, and music and/as sound.

<sup>4</sup> References to the political and cultural context of Beethoven's time and how his music has been used for a variety of effects, political programmes and associations - e.g. as the soundtrack to political events (the reunification of Germany in 1990 and subsequent commemorations) or cinema classics (such as Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*) – following his death are myriad. Suffice it to say that Beethoven's personal life and political affiliations have provided much material for conjecture as well as for ways into the analysis of his contribution to musical form, and content – the musical language – of his work (Pasler 2008, pp. 28-29, Said 2006, pp. 7-14, Attali 1989). How his music, and that of other German composers, has been (mis-)used for political purposes in the last century is another thread, explored in Ross's chapter, 'Death Fugue: Music in Hitler's Germany' in *The Rest is Noise* (2010, p. 333 passim). And the influence of different performances of well-known pieces, such as the Fifth Symphony or the Ode to Joy from the Ninth Symphony, under different conductors (e.g. Herbert von Karajan, Daniel Barenboim) and their respective political and cultural references (Barenboim 2003, Service 2014) is another line of inquiry; all this without mentioning popular and electronic workings of the same composer; the electronic synthesizer version of the Ode to Joy, arranged by Walter/Wendy Carlos (1971, Warner Bros. Records - K 16145) in *A Clockwork Orange* is a case in point.

*1) Musical Cultures and/as Content*

Along with studies of the political associations that a particular music, or musician, may or may not have are those that focus on the representational dimensions, as Brown notes (2008, p. 5). And this is where most work on politics and music lends itself to IR scholars from an interpretative bent, that is, taking song lyrics as manifest political content even when not explicitly presented as political as such. To want to move interest in music and world politics past the literary – the message-bearing role of the words – in order to consider how the music itself also bears or produces meaning is not to dismiss the constitutive role that words do play. Indeed, some lyrics are explicit in their political intent by reference, if not linked to a politicising moment: anti-war and other sorts of protest songs, for instance. Where the words lend themselves to social science models that look to match political content – and portent – to historical context, researchers can go some way in empirically verifying links between that music and those politics. And in those cases where the political as content is not immediately decipherable in literal terms, the deployment of linguistic methods to unlock the connotations, allegories or 'poetics' (Krimms 2000) of these lyrics offers another way into understanding what a song is about.

Words do matter in this respect. However, in methodological terms, staying only with the words returns us to the literary interpretative exercise where meaning is extracted from manifest or latent content, the musical elements and settings for those words remaining moot. But much music, in western and non-western traditions, is without words. Moreover, rap and traditions see words as both content and rhythm and melody; literary – and overly literal – interventions can take us so far that they miss the musico-political point (Miller 2008).<sup>5</sup>

Another musically productive approach might come from taking the root of the notion of musical *cultures* seriously at the intersection of classical and popular music – and cultural – studies, sociology and anthropology. These disciplines take culture as mobile and motile, as an active component of the contemporary world and the historical narratives underpinning it; culture as cultivation and education and everyday practice. Music, in this key, can be construed also as

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<sup>5</sup> Literal takes on the meaning of musical lyrics, in the blues, for instance, where allegory and euphemism are prevalent, or a lack of knowledge of how urban African-American idioms are integral to the layers of meaning and cross-references that characterise rap and hip-hop texts can infer a lack of political substance or relevance even when in fact the piece in question is suffused in (national and global) politics; e.g. Billie Holliday's iconic cover of Abel Meeropol's song 'Strange Fruit' (1937) is one example where a literal reading of the lyrics would completely miss the political point of reference, and of protest.

political and economic *practices*, which are inevitably, albeit asynchronously, imbued with the sociocultural geographies of *musical* ones. Politics, culture, and music examined as dynamic processes, everyday practices; 'musickings' in other words ... [M]usic and politics are to be taken as verbs (*doing* words, mobile meanings) rather than nouns (naming words, static categories) (Franklin 2005, pp. 5-6; see also Small 1998).

Manifold opportunities for the aesthetic-cum-cultural turn in IR present themselves by taking both conventional and new musical analysis on board in more concerted ways. In this way, even the traditions of so-called parsimonious models of the study of international behaviour can be rendered with musical nuance. Musical subcultures and the political responses they incur – as in the examples of the punks of Indonesia or of Pussy Riot – invite anthropologically or ethnographically rich descriptions of the class, gendered, racial, geopolitical and other determinations of other internationals and their situation with regard to the ethnocentric and gendered biases of the discipline's received wisdoms.

Musical analysis can also produce new sorts of situated, embodied knowledge of the audible politics of everyday life, i.e. hear the 'audible world' (Attali 1994) in ways that need not reduce cultural artefact, practice or sonority to the master historical narrative of modernity and its Postmodern Other. Contemporary musical practices from digital sampling and its precursors in avant-garde music indicate different methods for deconstructing, re-mixing and circulating the inter/national and other political modalities.

This polysemic model for musico-political analysis also suggests the limits of the 'creative genius' (whose great work must be reproduced faithfully) account of music and its isomorphic relation to the technocratic reserve of politics for specialists in policy and diplomacy. Non-western musical forms – and politics – can be understood and taken up as formative of the inter/national and other formations, and not merely products to be appropriated or mimicked.

## *2) Music and the Senses: Bodies*

Nonetheless, culture is no longer a marginal or even controversial area of interest for IR. The literary and visual turn in the study of world politics, and conversely a burgeoning interest in how arts and culture are permeated by political concerns, have brought us far. IR's preference remains for a visualised literary re-imagining of core objects of analysis and themes, for their defenders as well as critics looking to address the imbalance of established western political-cultural narratives. But what about those other senses of perception: hearing and its sociocultural and political economic object of attention, noise-sound-music?

The relative under-theorisation of the sonically embodied qualities of material cultures, of the sound systems (Henriques 2008, 2010) of soundscapes and the massive popularity of non-western, so-called world music that has moved into – or been taken into – the western political and media power centres is anything but a soundless phenomenon. The manner in which the sense of sight came to take priority over other sensory experience has had consequences for how we know things and how we assess that knowledge; this holds true for IR as it does for other parts of the western, modernist episteme based on generating knowledge about societies that are predominately experienced and apprehended in visual terms (Franklin 2005, pp. 8-9); the interrelationship between perception and conception where the (mind's) eye is the predominant organ for observation and contemplation.

Music, like dance, is an art form and set of practices that is non-visual by definition. The main elements of music are sonic, and with that linked to our bodies as receptors and conveyers of the rhythmic properties alone. Like dance, we make and receive music through our bodies, whatever the instrument, with manifest consequences for international relations (Cusick 2006).

In particular, the conditions that occasioned the predominance of sight *disembodied* knowledge. In *Techniques of the Observer*, Jonathan Crary (1992) recounts the invention of the camera obscura. The chamber was fitted with a pinhole, and later with a lens, that projected light from outside onto an interior wall, producing an image of the external environment. The point at which the observation is produced – the pinhole – was no longer attached to the body.

Crary shows how the camera obscura articulated an abstract, disembodied point of observation that in turn created an ideal, disembodied subjectivity that could be assessed in terms of how adequately it receives and reflects a given, fixed, external, objective, visual world. The camera obscura thus enabled the disembodying of observation. Narrative (stories, novels, plots, etc.) similarly obtains a 'life of its own' and appears as a positive object that can be more or less well described and inserted into an abstract international political analysis as evidence or case – this is Drezner's method for reading the Zombie trope (2015). This externalising and fixing of visual or narrative evidence also renders them instrumental, ripe for 'problem solving' (Cox 1981).

Hearing, in contrast, is taken to be a subordinate sense and, as such, its neglect or exclusion from approaches to world politics that seek objectivity and rigour is unsurprising. Where the visual can now be rendered as fixed, external and objective, musical sounds are more difficult to pin down for empirically verifiable observations, even when rendered through critical, interpretive schools of IR thought or behaviouralist studies based on neurological models of how music affects the human body and psyche. This arises because, at this disciplinary crossroads (see Pasler 2008, for instance), the analyst is

dealing with a different sort of material; with physical and emotional aspects to the experiential, phenomenological qualities of sound-waves, their reception, replication and then amplification towards and within the body, individual and group (Henriques 2010, Mowitt 2002).

Whereas the techniques and technologies of observation produced a disembodied ideal observer, against which all actual observations could be measured, the perception and organisation of sound as an embodied experience, with physical properties (Goldsmiths 2012) and normative associations (Brown 2008), needs to be taken more into account. Political backlashes against new music, musical countercultures and innovations to the canon are also responses to unfamiliar sounds, coded as dissonant, socially unacceptable, politically reprehensible; the two events in Indonesia and Russia above are cases in point.

### 3) *Music and/as Sound*

There is a thriving research endeavour to archive the sounds of our world, urban or rural, human-made or from nature.<sup>6</sup> Sounds as part of our ecosystem and surroundings collected as integral to the audible world in which we live can be heard, and used for music-making; indeed, the mid-twentieth-century avant-garde tradition of modern music, referred to by DJ cultures and electronic composers today (Miller 2007, Lethem 2008), have become non-composed elements of music in their own right. Singly, in sequence or as electronic, digitalised mixes sounds as *scapes*, to borrow from Appadurai (2002, see also Miller 2008), of a particular sort comprise both the sound waves travelling through a medium (air, water, the internet) and the distribution of bodies (sentient, mechanical, reverberating) that produce, receive, respond to and regenerate the audible world as they do so; for some ecstasy, for others cacophony.

Sound is thus irreducibly both a given – a physical and an experiential practise – and a constructed social relation. The *musicking* part of any soundscape produces the affective connections between sounding – and, perforce, dancing – bodies and listening audiences. Music, as something that bodies do in these soundscapes, makes manifest, materially, the connections that theories of affect look to locate and explore. These material connections between resonating and re-sounding bodies in time are what Henri Lefebvre describes in *Rhythmanalysis* (2004): a political *auto-gestion* (self-generating, self-expressing) of communities that may or may not express the identities of territorially locked national states alleged to be primary by International Relations theory and practice.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, the Chicago-based *World Listening Project* at <<http://www.worldlisteningproject.org/>>.



Likewise for western music theory and research. As Paul D. Miller (a.k.a. DJ Spooky the Subliminal Kid) points out, fully aware of the western literary and musical avant-gardist canons from which he is drawing:

sound and the forms we inhabit are intimately intertwined. What happens when you reverse engineer the process, and think of sound [and implicitly music] as nothing but thawed architecture? The moment between sounds, the moment between thought and perceptions – it's one of those intangible structures that give meaning to the things it separates ... that's something to give one – pause. (Miller 2008, p.17)

Miller draws a line here from Jacques Attali and his study of western classical music and the rise of the modern nation-state (1994, see also Berger 2007) to bring both adept and novice up to date with music-making in digital, sound-mixed and web-infused settings. Any exploration of the music-culture-politics nexus has to take on board the formative roles of digital techniques, club cultures and their DJ maestri, and the internet in changing the terms and conditions under which music is conceived, performed and consumed. Via the electric and computer-mediated synapses of an audible world, there is also a digitally sampled and relayed one. So despite the last point made in the section above about working, rather than fine-tuned, definitions, some further conceptual questions are in order.

Like philosophers of music before us, one initial step is to ask (though not necessarily to answer), what is *music*, as opposed to sound – or indeed noise – today (Goldsmith 2012)? Is it an artefact? Is it performance? Is an abstract definition, such as 'organised sound', sufficient, and if so, what counts as organisation? From here, the question of 'what does *the study of world politics* sound like?' becomes a chance to refigure debates about the timeline of the international and its morphing in and out of the local-global nexus through these social relations made politically audible.

In other words, the resonating, shifting, borrowing, disarticulating individual and collective bodies of music are always already potentially political, though not necessarily in the ways and places IR expects them to be. Against the objective fixing of passive and objective bodies that are more-or-less adequate to the qualities prescribed for them, as seen by IR, these musical international relations disrupt the sensibility (Rancière 2009, 2013) that always locates politics someplace else.

In this spirit of disciplinary, sonic sound-systems and unplugged, analogue and digitally (re) sampled crossovers, we would note the need for new vocabularies, analytical idioms and terms of reference. In this case, not from the literary greats but from the musical greats and not-so-greats – for after all, success and greatness have both been shown to be a product

of (global) market forces and the mass production economies of scale of the twentieth-century culture industry and its grip on copyright; one that has been slipping but is still hanging on for dear life (Lethem 2008).

The point here is how to move from examining the written text, and hence sub-text, of world politics in song lyrics to examining its integral musical elements, its sonic forms, i.e. how to examine the fact that 'politics – International Relations – can be construed as *audible*; studies and experiences as sound – music, noise, silence ... based on the premise that the "political", the "economic", the "sociocultural" constitute soundscapes as well as landscapes' (Franklin 2005, pp. 7-8).

Let us now turn to the wider methodological implications of the above claims as they pertain to the IR canon and its critics, but also to the ways in which music and cultural studies scholars have broached political questions in turn. In both cases, disciplinarity, in the singular and the plural, is called to account to consider how there is more at stake than 'simply deploying the tools and methods of other fields (the standard version of "interdisciplinarity") but by ... using music as a critical tool to analyse contemporary critical cultural, historical, and cultural issues whose importance cuts across fields' (Lewis 2008, pp. vii-viii).

### **Wider Methodological Implications**

Music critic for *The New Yorker* and advocate for dissolving the classical-popular music divide, Alex Ross cuts right across disciplinary and genre-based boundaries that posit an a priori value hierarchy between high and low culture (in this case between classical and popular music), unprofitable avant-gardist and commercially successful cultural forms that have sustained culturally and economically reductionist defences – and critiques – in the established order of things. He notes that:

[Writing] about music isn't especially difficult ... [We need] to demystify the art to some extent, dispel the hocus-pocus, while still respecting the boundless human complexity that gives it life (Ross 2011, pp. xiii-xiv).

Ross' observation above resonates with the methodologically and conceptually polyglot spirit that has been at the heart of a boom in studies of popular culture in Politics and International Relations departments across the UK, Western Europe and the US. Can an engagement with a more inclusive conception of music similarly destabilise the hierarchies separating how IR debates pivot still on the duality between 'high' international politics and 'low' popular culture?

Whatever the response may be to this question, with all this cultural richness and cross-disciplinary sharing comes a note of caution about the twin perils of methodological parochialism and disciplinary hermeticism on the one hand and, on the other, a temptation to treat the arts and culture as ontologically distinct from other objects of analysis – that is to dis-embed these artefacts and practices from their also over-determined, changing socio-historical contexts. Sometimes this is through a quest to trump the mainstream with new transcendent categories of inquiry. Sometimes it is also the product of another mainstream and its critics, in this case that of western cultural criticism, art and literary theory.

As Ross (2011) reminds us above, bringing an aesthetic or cultural sensibility to a discipline such as IR, a discipline that has long eschewed either the relevance or formative influence of those domains deemed strictly-not-political, need not lead to mystifications in an attempt to present the merging of politics, art and culture as if such a merger in itself represents a shift up the epistemological food chain; another step forward in a quest for truth about how the world really works or not, as the case may be – for example, a civilisational or political failure in the fulfilment of certain ideas about modernity, enlightenment, cosmopolitan ideals, liberal democracy, and so on. Disciplinary border-crossings like musical collaborations work best as a reciprocal practice, or at least a two-way street.

Along these lines, arguments about politics and aesthetic theory notwithstanding (Bleiker 2012), one established approach to popular cultural references looks for mimetic illustrations of the 'international' in popular culture. Daniel Drezner (2015), for example, uses the notion of a zombie apocalypse to illustrate the different approaches taken by different schools of IR thought to explaining the behaviours of actors in the face of threat.

Another favourite line of inquiry is to consider how reconfigurations of vertically modelled local–national–international political dynamics are interpolated with changes in the practices, artefacts and global culture industries of the day. In these kinds of approach, music can be used as an empirical focus without broaching the musicological dimensions. Thus, for example, studies of cultural imperialism that look for cultural change in subordinate social formations in response to imperial or colonial pressures (Grayson, Davies and Philpott 2009); or investigations of how intellectual property regimes emerge in response to the 'piracy' of cultural products under the aegis of digital downloading and the global music industry and its respective dance and subcultures of sampling. From here, we see celebratory and concerned studies of hip-hop, DJ dance cultures and the appropriation of cultural heritage by savvy and creative western musicians where the quest for authenticity has replaced the critique of said authenticity (Adorno 2002).

Such an approach – one that treats the international as an independent variable and the cultural, such as music, as a dependent variable – remains valuable for understanding conventional international politics, ironically because:

(1) it highlights the ways in which the study – and practice – of the world politics/popular culture/everyday life nexus are contingent upon the interplay of their respective ways of doing things, knowledge-power relations and respective horizons of understanding; and

(2) it illustrates that cultural forms, including popular culture, are also shaped by the large-scale and localised political and economic concerns that continue to engage the on-going debates that differentiate the various schools of thought in International Relations as an academic discipline.

In this understanding, music can be incorporated without challenging these ways of conducting research – diehards who would keep the social and cultural world completely out of the equation notwithstanding. However, when we move into asking questions of a different, musicological order – such as ‘What, or indeed where, are the international (or global) politics of music-making?’ or ‘How are world politics rendered musicologically?’ – from an IR disciplinary perspective, we may find our analysis suffering from some important limitations.

The first of these is that, by its very nomenclature, *International Relations* is an epistemological given that posits the autonomy of inter-state relations over and above the practices and productions of the (popular) cultural realm. The prevailing ontologies and methodologies of IR remain intact in this respect, even when cogently critiqued or examined from other points of view (geographical, ethnic, gendered peripheries) or methodological choice (post-structuralist, constructivist, feminist, and so on).

Second, even if a critique of IR is implicitly or explicitly expressed in the ways the field takes up popular culture, then methodologically a prevailing positivist reflex tends to foreclose deeper explorations of the ontological foundations of the whole enterprise – based on literary and visual registers that validate the observer's power over the observed, the written over the sonically and kinetically experienced. Thus, even if said international, including its morphing into the global, is found to have negative effects in or consequences for cultural practice, and even if changes to governance and organisation are called for – as in Critical International Relations Theory – the international nevertheless *is*: and the ways the international distributes and locates the possibilities for political life remain over the horizon of critical expectations. In other words, in this understanding of the relation between music and world politics, there has been no ‘musicking’ of IR at all.

But what happens if we turn this refrain on its head? What if we investigate instead two sorts of questions that, while overlapping, are distinct in their methodological implications: 'What does, or could, world politics sound like?' and 'How does, or could, *the study of* world politics sound?' And by what means can we apprehend these politics of knowledge as and in sounds; rendered in recognisable forms of the classical or popular musical canon that have been unpacked and addressed by music scholars for their own silences and oversights (of gender, race, religion and class, for instance), or revised and reheard, thanks to mechanical and now digital forms of reproduction and (re-)creation?

To turn the inquiry around this way, IR scholarship into popular musical cultures, indeed into music as cultural practice more generally, needs to take more seriously the work done by musicologists and ethnomusicologists. Have scholars of world politics got the musicological tools of analysis on hand or, indeed, the will to engage with the 'new music research' literature (Franklin 2005, pp. 10-12) and debates? Are they willing to shift from the search for meaning to the qualities of music-as/and-sound that is not, and cannot, be bound by nation-state imaginaries and institutional assumptions (Miller 2008)? Are they willing to take the latter as constituent of a particular set of political questions for this century that has its roots in twentieth-century cultural and technological changes to how music is made, performed and consumed?

If the answer to the above questions is 'yes', namely that there is a rich vein of inquiry into the musical/musicological dimensions of world politics, then the task before us is to get closer to music scholars who have been considering the shifting politics of the musical forms, riffs, samples, ragas and performance traditions that are music research's objects of analysis. Or should a musical interest in the study of the popular culture and world politics nexus just accept at face value the non-musical dimensions to the appropriation or looting of a well-loved score being played over and over in the headphones of the tank drivers in a combat zone, or oozed into our semi-conscious in the elevators of the hotels hosting international events, or admire the sounds of music from home on the small radio in the 'illegal' migrant worker's carrier bag, which gives her some homely comfort in a hostile foreign city?

Where to put the remixed, electronic mash-ups of the music of the internet age or the singular and individualised creative enterprise based on inspiration, originality and the genial figure of the great (white, male) composer/DJ? Particularly since electronic music and its digital-era progeny, sampling, echoed arguments in literary theory that 'appropriation, mimicry, quotation, allusion, and sublimated collaboration consist of a kind of sine qua non of the creative act, cutting across all forms and genres in the realm of cultural production' (Lethem 2008, p. 29). It has been some time now since these and other musical myths were debunked within mainstream music research, ethnocentric and political economic predilections put in their place in the wake of feminist and ethnographic

studies of how the rest of the world makes, and consumes, their music – how their music becomes refashioned as ours.

These sorts of questions remain open to debate within music studies, broadly defined even as they are under-theorised in IR circles for now. Political and technological changes over the last quarter century, at least, have established the ways in which digital musical cultures and creative industries have become established in popular and scholarly imaginaries. They provide the soundtracks for computer and video games, become source material for DJs and/or composers – and thereby point to ways in which these contemporary musical practices play with those of the past. This is where musicking (the study of) world politics articulates political closures and possibilities in turn.

### **In Conclusion**

As Lee Hirsch notes, in his reflections on the importance of song and musical manifestations during times of intense national and transnational struggle through the prism of the anti-apartheid struggles of the black South African majority, the starting point is well measured already. Throughout history and across (musical) cultures, in ‘many struggles worldwide, people have used music to give courage, to console, and to strengthen ... . Song becomes a means to mobilise the masses by creating an electrifying climate for change’ (Hirsch 2008, p. 217). The converse is also true in that history shows a variety of musical forms, compositions and means of transmission – indeed, sometimes the same one (the much-used Beethoven, for example, before, during and since the Nazi period) – have also been deployed to create ‘an electrifying climate for change’ (ibid.) for social and political forces of repression, genocidal programmes of destruction, and cultural revolutions. This is now a truism since *Resounding International Relations* was published. What we need now is to examine more closely how these sonorities operate on, and within, listening and receptive bodies, physical and communal.

What is more difficult to ascertain, and to keep situated in IR frames of reference, is how specifically the music provides a rich vein of analysis for scholars of world politics. Situating music in IR is a challenge, first, because the music itself evokes a host of musicological – that is, theoretical and methodological – issues and has its own scholarly literature (pointed to in our references). As Miller notes, similarly to many others, music ‘is always a metaphor. It’s an open signifier, an invisible, utterly malleable material. It’s not fixed or cast in stone’ (Miller 2004, pp. 20-21; see also Pasler 2008 and Miller 2008). A second reason is that music scholarship takes the analysis out of meta-/macro levels of analysis of international relations into the multiplex, micro-analytical frames of cultural studies, the formal concerns of (ethno)musicology, and the everyday practices and gendered power hierarchies of sociology and anthropology.

But we cannot embrace these opportunities without acknowledging the challenges: to (re) educate ourselves both musically and musicologically. We must broaden the analysis of music from its long-standing dependence on discovering the manifest or hidden content via lyrics or marketing genre. We need to acknowledge the problem of ethnocentrism and its twin, the exotification of music – meaning not only world music, but music as the Other. Our plea to consider method as a two-way street: International Relations as a theory of the problem of difference (Inayatullah and Blaney 2004), of bodies (Shepherd 2014), and with that of the audible world. To date, music/sound is still overlooked, constituent elements to explorations of what may or may not constitute the political in current debates. This two-way street also means taking into account the racial, gendered and geopolitical forces that position politico-musical differences as subordinate to the dominant key.

But while we engage our analyses with insights drawn from IR, we also seek to engage musicological language, literature and modes of analysis to consider the phenomenology of sound and the influences of emergent musical practices, such as digital, club cultures and remixing that in turn take their cues from the musicking of generations, and genres, past.

To end by looking back in order to move forward, a decade on from the conversations and musical sharing that were part of *Resounding International Relations*, we recall that this book was conceived as an invitation, an *opening* by all those who took part. By this we mean that moving out into the world of sound, of which music is one aspect, was an opening-up of the field as an increasingly multifaceted and multidisciplinary enterprise to new sources of material for reflection. But we also mean to enable an opening of the ears and aural sensibilities to the ways in which music research and musical practice can contribute to the study of world politics, a field that is still very much under construction in this century.

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